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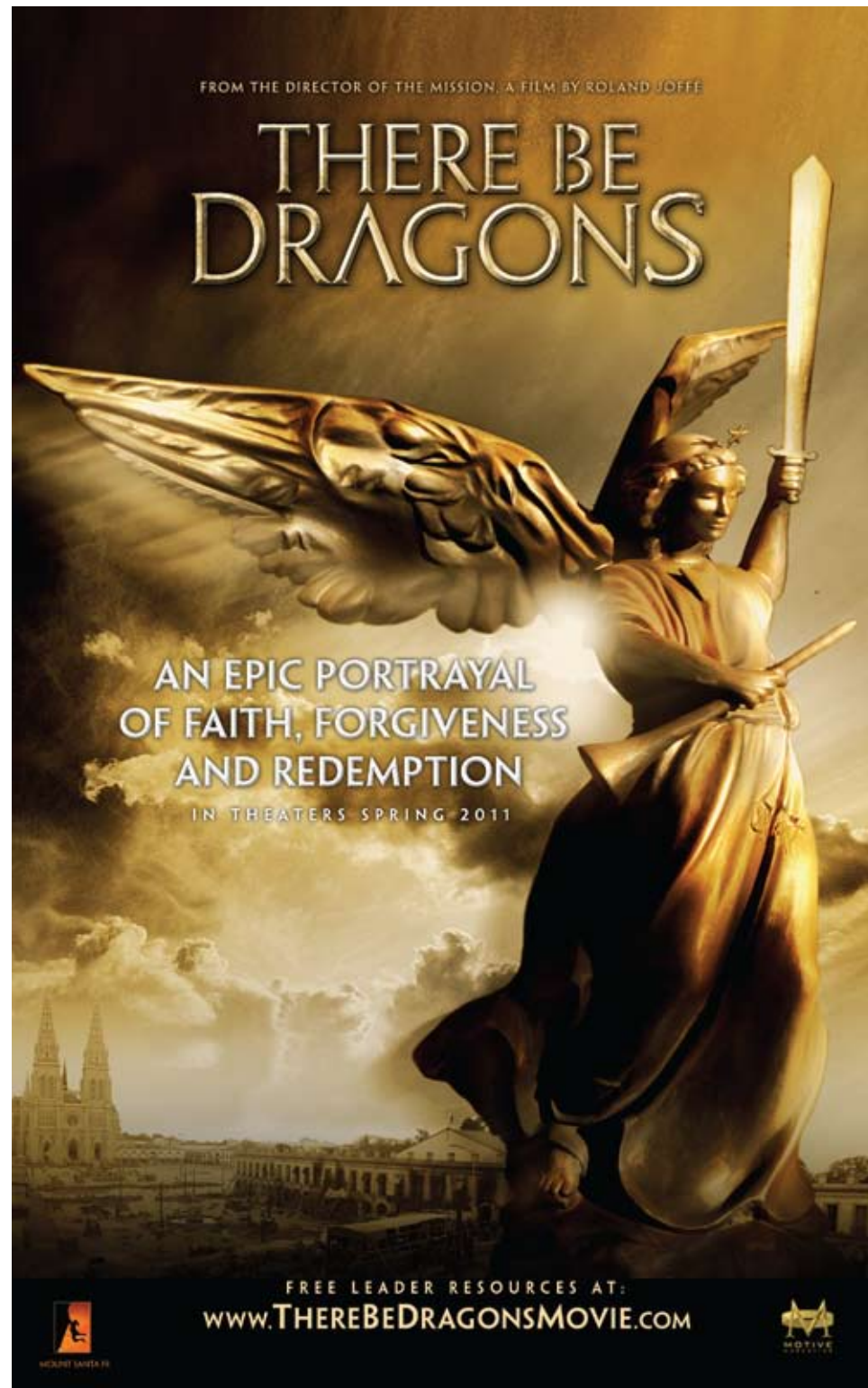
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A better you

As we count the final days of 2010, it's easy to step back and see the bigger picture of a year that's zipped right by: what got done, what didn't get done, high points and sticking points.

It's a time for reflection, resolution and rediscovery. Fall bends gracefully to winter, and we remember that turn-arounds are possible.

We hope this issue of *Tobias* captures that spirit, inspiring you to become your best self. That's become a hackneyed command, issued by Americans (be they TV hosts or megapastors) who are rich enough to buy better lives. But the core of the concept is not commercial; it is a spiritual entreaty, a call to grow in self-knowledge and holiness and become the one-of-a-kind person God created in his image and likeness.

Catholic singles are uniquely suited to answer that call, applying the time and energy and prayer. This issue should get you started. You'll get the verdict on online degrees (page 17) and the skinny on *The Happiness Project* (page 24). You'll meet four courageous Catholic singles doing big things in bold places: orphanages and a convent, New Orleans and Afghanistan (page 42).

You'll hear from a woman who left a prestigious job and a comfortable paycheck to pursue a passion (page 60). You'll take a peek at wide-reaching bucket lists (page 41). And in case your end-of-year turnaround requires a stronger kick, we'll fill you in on two powerful getaways, one to the Holy Land (page 54), one to a historic lighthouse (page 46).

It's time to dig in and begin the hard work of self-improvement.



Christina
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

P.S. What would you like to see in our next issue? Email me at Christina@TobiasMag.com.

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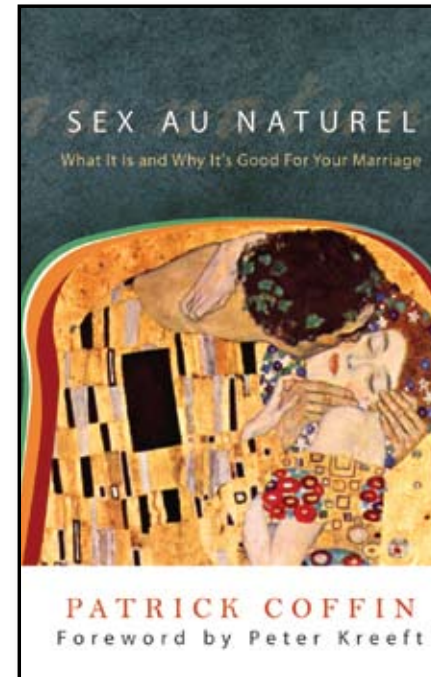
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SEX AU NATUREL

What It Is and Why It's Good For Your Marriage



Sex Au Naturel: What It Is and Why It's Good For Your Marriage by Catholic Answers Radio host Patrick Coffin is a bracing ride across the landscape of the Catholic sexual ethic. If you're looking for intellectual ammo with which to defend and explain the teaching of *Humanae Vitae*, or if you reject it altogether, you'll agree that Coffin's winsome arguments approach the topic from a wide array of new and persuasive angles.

160 pages, \$12.95



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We hear you!

Roxane Salonen's story on Lori Mayer brought me to tears. Lori, I am praying for you and your precious little children. Your faith and courage have truly touched me.

TERESA HUNTINGTON
Bethany, Okla.

Enough with all the romantic themes! I don't care about the cost of a wedding or Steve Martin's take on infidelity. I'm content being single and plan to remain single all my life. I'm waiting for *Tobias* to meet my needs.

CLAIRE DAHLSTROM
Union, N.J.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *We understand and we're working to meet all those needs. That's why we created "Singular Sensation," "Corner Office," "Faith @Work," "Roamin' Catholic" and "Intercession" and why we recently added book reviews. We hoped our summer features on travel, photography, house hunting, weight management, the Mass parts and discernment would interest you. Including the ads, marriage-oriented material took up less than one third of our summer issue. But please give us more time to find the right balance.*



Thanks to Marion Fernández-Cueto for a thorough examination of the risks and rewards of relocating for love. I have contemplated this in the past but have always been hesitant, later wondering if my hesitance was a serious roadblock in my quest for

a soul mate. This article gave me the practical wisdom that makes me feel a little more open to taking that leap.

JOE RANDALL
Lincoln, Neb.

I was so inspired by Susan Jones' "Extreme Makeover." How cool to think that she was praying the Rosary while burning all those pounds!

MOLLY MCQUILLAN
Quincy, Mass.

Awesome pictures of Peru by Julie Carroll! Makes me want to hop on a plane! I hope to see more stuff like this in *Tobias*.

DEREK BAUER
Bellevue, Wash.



Selling my stuff and hitting the road

by **GENE MONTERASTELLI**



I am 52 percent of APeX Ministries. (I outweigh the guy I work with.) We work with parishes, schools, and dioceses all over the U.S. and Canada, which has us on the road more than 100 days a year.

We combine juggling, sketch comedy, drama and personal stories with the Gospel message. We throw things at each other; we are evangelists.

It began in the fall of 2000 when I went to see Cameron Crowe's movie "Almost Famous" about a young man who follows a band and ends up writing for Rolling Stone. As I was made the 20-minute walk home I imagined how fun it would be to live the rock-and-roll lifestyle on the road full-time for months on end. I was already traveling as a performer, but it was short trips.

To live that kind of lifestyle, I figured I'd need a mobile phone and a computer to run our ministry, our juggling stuff for performances, and my clothes. The moment I recognized that is all I would need was the moment that I walked in my front door and I looked up at my

packed two-bedroom apartment.

Throughout the fall and winter I sold or gave away everything I owned. I pared my life down to what would fit in my Subaru Forester and I set out on an 18-month pilgrimage – an amazing adventure I was able to enjoy because of my singlehood.

I drove from show to show, covering all 48 continental states and six Canadian provinces.

I learned vital lessons on the road. I quickly realized the difference between convenience and need. I also learned to embrace spontaneity. I didn't have a routine for Tuesday in Des Moines, Iowa, so I woke up wondering, "What can I find here that is new and exciting?"

Being on the road lifted me mentally away from where I was heading next or what needed to be done that week. I could enjoy right where I was. What a gift to be able to just pick up and go. ■

I learned vital lessons on the road. I quickly realized the difference between convenience and need.

Tell us what you think! We're eager to get your feedback on this issue of Tobias. Send your letter to the editor to Christina@TobiasMag.com. Be sure to note your name, city and state.

DONNA-MARIE COOPER O'BOYLE

is a woman on the go! The award-winning author, EWTN TV host and popular speaker paused from her travels to show *Tobias* the contents of her tote bag. Learn more about this mobile mom at www.DonnaCooperOboyle.com.



toothbrush

It's not a good idea to have spinach in your teeth when giving a keynote address!

mac

I need my laptop even when I want to be away from technology.

water

Yes, you better believe it! Holy water goes with me everywhere.

phone

An umbilical cord to stay connected with my family and friends.

rosary

Always with me. But my ten fingers are put to good use too.

cards

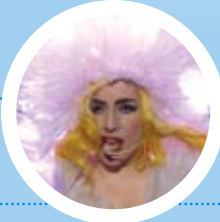
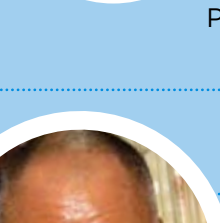

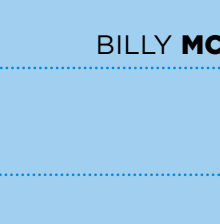
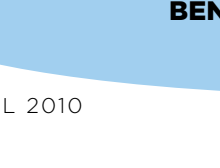



Constantly giving out my card - amazing things come of it. (Check out my blog, www.viewdomesticchurch.blogspot.com, for the fisherman story as an example.)

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TOBIAS



Popularity contest by Twitter followers

	LADY GAGA	7,104,349
	JUSTIN BIEBER	6,075,253
	PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA	5,906,326
	NFL	1,795,210
	DALAI LAMA	1,040,141
	SARAH PALIN	301,117
	CATHOLIC BLOGGER BILLY MCDERMOTT	62,089
	EWTN	7,104
	BENEDICTINE SISTERS	1,463

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Aiming high, falling hard



“All my life, I always wanted to be somebody. Now I see that I should have been more specific.” ■ JANE WAGNER

“Eagles may soar in the clouds, but weasels never get sucked into jet engines.”

■ JOHN BENFIELD



“Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work.”

■ THOMAS EDISON

“Every man is a fool for at least five minutes every day; wisdom consists of not exceeding the limit.”

■ ELBERT HUBBARD

“An optimist is a man that gets treed by a lion but enjoys the scenery.”

■ WALTER WINCHELL

“If you think you can or you think you can’t either way you are right.”

■ HENRY FORD

“I sometimes wonder if the manufacturers of fool-proof items keep a fool or two on their payroll to test things.”

■ ALAN COREN



‘There’s no place for ego’

Jeff Warner is the president of Warners’ Stellan, an appliance retailer with seven Minnesota locations. He was happy to field questions for Tobias readers.



Your company has grown in the face of big-box competition and a recession that crushed consumer confidence. How?

By creating strategies that maximize employee involvement and setting goals and metrics that allow us to measure the level of success of our execution of those strategies.

How has your management style evolved over the years?

I’m more interested in listening now than I was when I was a younger man. I’m not so interested in being heard. I’ve learned that allowing our employees to share their views empowers them and helps them feel that they are contributing to our success. Happy cows make milk.

With 200 employees, you’ve been through your share of interviews.

Makes a job applicant stand out?

We are less interested in experience and more interested in character and attitude. Experience can be very overrated.

What’s been your biggest insight about managing the delicate dynamics of a family business?

Humility is vital. There is no place for ego in management. A spirit of respect is also crucial. I believe the love we have for each other helps us choose wisely when challenged. As a group we are much more capable than as individuals.

“I believe the love we have for each other helps us choose wisely when challenged.”

What would you tell your younger self?

Slow down. Don’t forget to balance your professional career and your family time. Listen more and talk less, especially to your God.

What’s your advice about finding a mate?

Be real. If it’s right you’ll know it. ■

Boost your career face to face, eye to eye

by **TOM BENGTON**



Has someone ever interrupted a conversation with you to check her BlackBerry?

How did it make you feel?

With all the distractions, particularly those of the electronic bent, effective communication has never been more difficult. Relationships drive most successful careers and businesses, and there is no relationship without good communications.

I was at a marketing conference recently where participants discussed various strategies for connecting with customers. While big advertising and public relations programs remain important, all communication starts small – it starts with the person right in front of you. You will never be able to connect with a mass market if you fail to connect with the person you are talking to face to face.

During one conference session, the presenters offered tips for connecting with that person right in front of you. Start, they said, by identifying something to appreciate about the other per-

son. This will help you to communicate with difficult people. It's easy to connect with people you like, but it is just as important to connect with people you don't like.

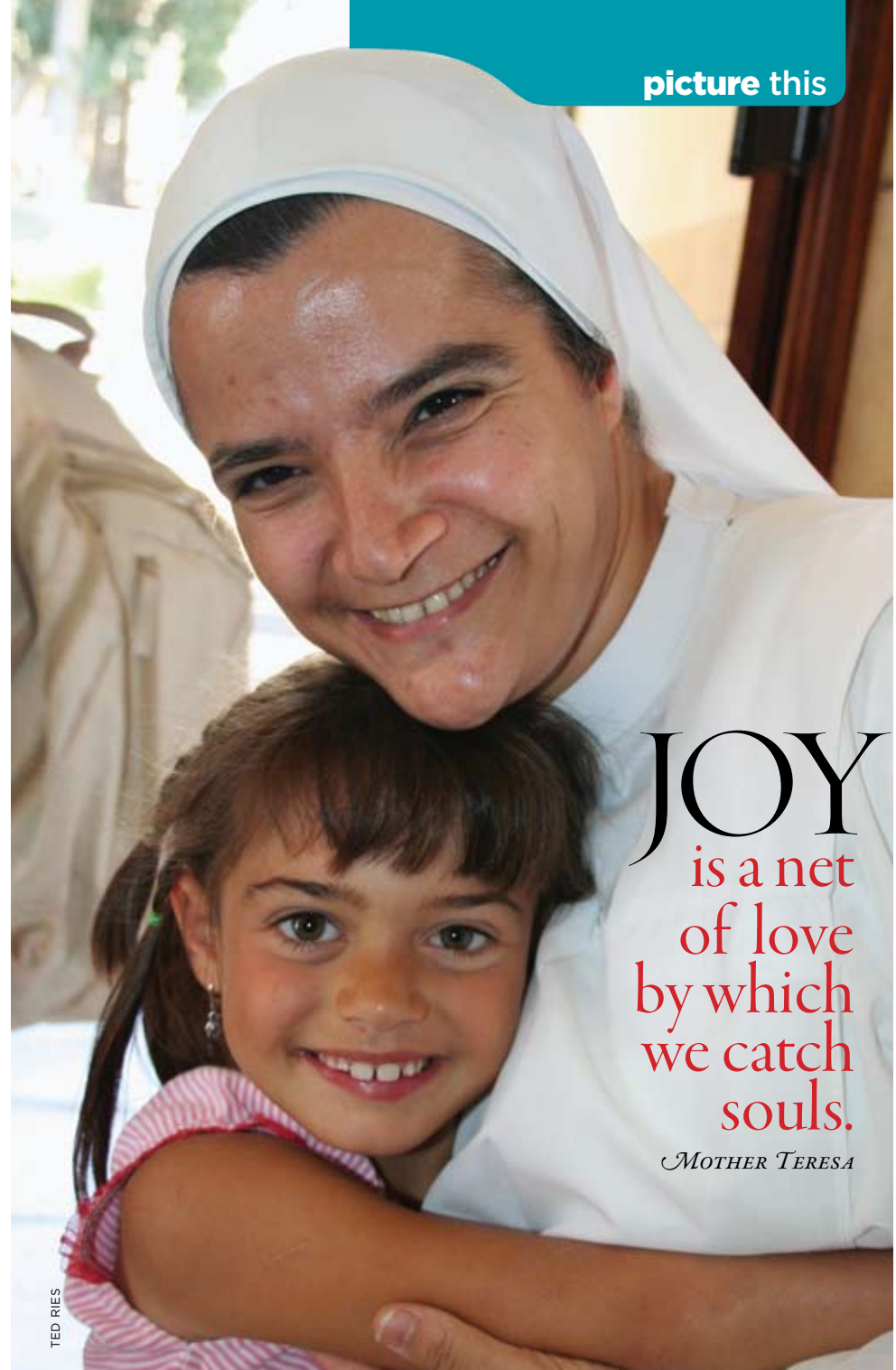
Then they had us pair up and look the other person in the eye for about a minute without saying anything. I was uneasy the first time, but by the third time I had grown accustomed to it. Many of us are not very good at eye contact, but you can actually get better by practicing.

Great communicators know how to make eye contact so effectively that they can make you feel like the only person in the room. They say that Mother Teresa had such an intense gaze she made a crowded street in Calcutta feel empty.

To get even five minutes of someone's complete, undivided attention is a real treat.

So be the person who gives that. That person will remember it and may reward you with something that is as rare as effective communication: loyalty. ■

Small business owner, writer and speaker Tom Bengton can be contacted at TomBengton@hotmail.com.



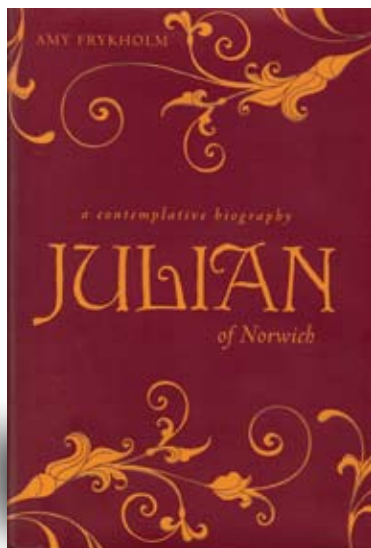
JOY
is a net
of love
by which
we catch
souls.

MOTHER TERESA

TED RIES

Pushing limits of history, prayer and physics

Reviewed by **MARION TASCIO FRIEDRICH**



JULIAN OF NORWICH: A CONTEMPLATIVE BIOGRAPHY

By Amy Frykholm

Paraclete Press, 2010 ■ 112 pages

Little is known about medieval English mystic Julian of Norwich, but in this new examination of Julian's life, Amy Frykholm takes that little and fleshes it into a meditative story at once peaceful and passionate.

Julian's famed Revelations of Di-

vine Love – the first book written in English by a woman – gives her account of and reflections on a series of visions (or “shewings”) of the suffering Christ, which she received while bedridden with illness at the age of 30.

Frykholm acknowledges in her introduction that she has made many speculations about the particulars of Julian's life. For example, scholars are not certain whether Julian entered religious life. Frykholm supposes she did, but not as a nun: as an anchoress, a solitary woman of prayer who lived in a freestanding cell next to a parish church. The parishioners supplied her with food and necessities; she offered them (through a curtained window) her counsel and prayers.

Frykholm has Julian retreating to the anchorage not only to perfect her union with God, but also to write her Revelations. Quietly, reverently, Frykholm ushers her readers into a corner of Julian's tiny stone cottage in the parish cemetery, presses a finger to her lips and gestures toward Julian, who – just as quietly and reverently – prepares her parchment, pens, and ink, and begins to write. And the words she writes – “There is no wrath in God, only love”...

“All shall be well and all shall be well and all manner of things shall be well” – are gentle yet fervent reassurances of God's tender, yearning love.

The term “contemplative biography,” a bit puzzling before the book's cover has been opened, proves a suitable description for this reading experience, which is like gazing at scenes from Julian's life on a series of stained-glass windows. True, it is her life as imagined by Frykholm, and so we do not know how the precise events unfolded or even if some of them (such as Julian's marrying, bearing children, and losing her family to the plague) happened at all.

Still, these glimpses into Julian's heart and into the lives of medieval England's workaday Catholics (or “even Christians”) leave the reader with the serene and satisfied sense that, however difficult or even tragic life becomes, all shall, indeed, within the bosom of Divine Love, be well.

THE GREATEST PRAYER: REDISCOVERING THE REVOLUTIONARY MESSAGE OF THE LORD'S PRAYER

By John Dominic Crossan

HarperOne, 2010 ■ 190 pages

The reader of *The Greatest Prayer* by historian John Crossan may come away inspired by Crossan's interpretation of the Our Father as God's lyrical call for collaboration with humankind; she may learn fascinating details about the setting in which Christ lived.

That collaboration, however, is not exactly a new idea (especially to Catholics, who believe in the power of intercession, the communion of saints,

and the indispensability of the works of mercy), and while those history lessons are interesting, the book as a whole proves ultimately underwhelming.

For instance, Crossan concludes that Jesus' death did not, was never meant to, atone for our sins: It was simply the only course of action left to a Man who would not abandon his principles. Christ's integrity, not his mercy, impelled him to embrace his cross.

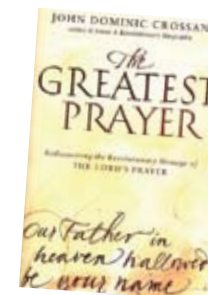
Hard to swallow? I agree.

And while Crossan explains the logic behind this claim, his explanation is unconvincing, his interpretation of the evidence shaky and incomplete.

Just as easily dismissed is Crossan's argument that the line “Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors” refers to literal debts, not to sins or “trespasses.” After discussing the need to help each other out from under the burden of earthly debt (I am with him there), Crossan explains that our literal debt to God is “to run God's world responsibly.”

Well, yes. But if the debts referred to in the prayer are literal debts that are supposed to be forgiven (i.e., wiped out), why on earth would Jesus tell us to ask God to let us off the hook for taking “adequate care of all God's creation”?

Furthermore, I found Crossan's lengthy argument that we should see God as asexual householder, rather than Father, unnecessarily revisionist and undermining to the prayer. True, God is neither male nor female. True, men and



women are equal in dignity. But they are not interchangeable in role. And Jesus encouraged us to call God Abba – Daddy – for a reason. Daddy is a warm spacious lap, a pair of strong protective arms, a familiar welcoming chest. Householder is a job title.

The Greatest Prayer can help flesh out your image of the world Christ walked. But for guidance in offering the Lord's Prayer more meaningfully, look elsewhere.

THE GRAND DESIGN

By Stephen Hawking
and Leonard Mlodinow

Bantam Books, 2010 ■ 181 pages

People of faith, if you have been wary of what you might see if you peek between the covers of Stephen Hawking's newly released follow-up to *A Brief History of Time* (Bantam Press, 1988), fear no more. While Hawking and his co-author, Leonard Mlodinow, dismiss the possibility of a divine Creator, the book is not an atheist's manifesto. The information it presents is not even inherently threatening to Christianity. It's just pretty cool.

The book's main thrust is the search for M-theory: a theory of physics that will explain and predict everything that happens in the universe. The details, such as the concept of a multiverse (a set of multiple universes) or the idea that ev-

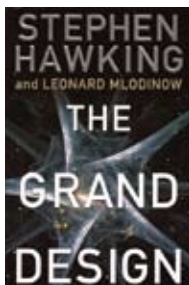
erything in the universe (on the particle level, at any rate) has every possible history, are downright heady. I read some of the explanations close to a dozen times and am still only circling an understanding of them. But my brain needed the workout, and honestly, it's been fun.

If you are (understandably) hesitant about reading a book that claims the universe created itself, let me try to help. Hawking and Mlodinow call free will an illusion, arguing that if M-theory is ever found, it will even predict human behavior. Their evidence for this is that experimenters have been able to cause human subjects to do certain things, like move a hand or foot, by manually activating the correct area of their brains. The authors take this to mean that every human action is chemically determined.

But those subjects moved their hands because a scientist did something to activate them. Under normal circumstances, another force must do that something. Why could that force not be the subjects' own sovereign decision-making?

Also, Hawking and Mlodinow identify even time itself as starting with the big bang, when all matter was contained in an infinitesimally small, infinitely dense package. They propose that anything that existed before that event – I have to ask: like the source of that package or the force that prompted it to start expanding? – is useless to consider because it would not correspond to the laws of our current model of the universe. And yet, some of us choose to consider it.

The *Grand Design* is nothing to be afraid of. It even has cartoons. ■



An MBA from the WWW?

AN ONLINE DEGREE

BY MEGAN MILLER

Gone are the days the Internet was only good for Googling. Whether it is meeting “the one,” taking a virtual tour of a new home, or buying a car, lots of life's big moments are now linked to the web.

Making a major career move is high on that list and more than 12 million Americans

are doing just that as they pursue online post-secondary education, according to the research firm Ambient Insight.

The appeal stems from a range of needs as diverse as the students themselves. In a 2006 study of online learners by Noel-Levitz Inc., 68 percent of students were female. About half of



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the decision to enter a virtual classroom is weighed against the sacrifice of a physical cohort. Additionally, for those who enroll, the importance of status is

another item to consider. Kaczrowski's school, Capella University, is widely recognized and respected among online institutions, but

next to big name, mortar-and-brick schools, its reputation does not always hold its weight.

However, the three letters that came

with the monthly tuition bill and hard work have. What matters most to Kaczrowski is not where his degree came from, but what his degree is.

IS AN MBA RIGHT FOR YOU?

BY MEGAN MILLER

"I'm glad I did it," said Brian Chan, a 2005 graduate of the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business, "It helped me get to the next step."

Chan, 32, who is a guest lecturer in Lithuania, also spends time flying between coasts to build connections for his new U.S. business.

With a 1999 Harvard undergraduate degree in the sciences, Chan was ready to rewrite his life blueprints. With a new career goal today and two years post-graduate school under his belt, Chan is eager to finally lay the groundwork for his new company, a responsible business investment firm.

A major factor in Chan's area of interest stems from his sturdy Catholic faith. While studying at Wharton, Chan noticed none of

the nearly 1,600 business students were attending Newman Center activities so he formed the Wharton School of Business Catholic students group. With a nearly 25 percent Catholic contingency in the department, the club has high participation.

"It helped me not only to have people to go to Mass with...but to have good friends [in the program] for support," Chan said.

In addition to orchestrating his local branch, Chan also facilitates a web site connecting various Catholic MBA groups at www.catholicmba.org.

For others, choosing a Catholic university comes at a cost worth spending. Jeff Kaczrowski, who earned his MBA at a non-religious online institution, is now director of alumni relations for the Opus Col-

lege of Business at the University of St. Thomas.

"When I first started at St. Thomas, one thing that blew me away was they had a center for business ethics, but [ethics are] also a part of the curriculum," he said.

Indeed, the difference in Catholic and secular institutions can be striking. At the Mendoza College of Business at Notre Dame, Director of Admissions Brian Lourdes says the value placed on ethical decision-making separates the school from secular institutions. Ninety three courses have at least one section dedicated to ethics.

Aside these traditional universities, new universities like John Paul the Great Catholic University, founded in 2006 in San Diego, are popping up across the country in response to a national need.

"Our Catholic worldview permeates everything," said Martin Harold, director of admissions at John Paul

An MBA is not everything in life, but in terms of **career building**, it may be just that

the Great. Students grapple daily with the question: "What is it like to live your faith actively in the workplace?"

In spring 2011 the university will see its first business class graduate.

With a degree as costly as an MBA, reaching up to \$50,000 a year before living expenses, there are important factors to consider before diving in.

- Do you have a few years of professional or corporate experience? Has your employment history led you to this point?
- What are your true reasons for pursuing this degree? If you are looking purely for credentials, perhaps a self-inventory is in order.
- Are you really looking for this degree? If you're seeking a career change, maybe this is your next move. But if you're looking for an escape from your current endeavors, better think twice.

AVERAGE ALUMNI SALARY OF TOP FOUR RANKED U.S. MBA PROGRAMS

\$160,848
■ WHARTON SCHOOL

\$161,887
■ HARVARD BUSINESS SCHOOL

\$164,863
■ STANFORD SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

\$160,679
■ COLUMBIA BUSINESS SCHOOL

“Now that they have earned that accreditation, they have built some of that credibility,” he said. “I think it’s becoming a more respected degree than in the past.”

Many students will find that building field experience and putting in effective study hours will yield high results regardless of the institution on the degree.

According to a recent Zogby study, four out of five business leaders say they favorably view online degrees because they perceive those graduates as more motivated. For instance, at DeVry, many recent grads are consistently landing big-name jobs, Bendix said.

“DeVry University graduates from the last five years have worked at 96 of the Fortune 100 companies,” she said. “The top five employers of our graduates from the last five years are all Fortune 100 companies, including AT&T, Verizon Communications, General Electric, Intel, and IBM.”

Another upside for online learners is financial. What Kaczrowski sacrificed in alumni relations and credentials he made up for financially, as his online degree came with a much lower price tag than

the average top-tier business school.

However, it was not the monthly billing statement where Kaczrowski saved the most; rather, it came in convenience factors. Instead of driving from work, to class, to home, he drove straight home, saving gas and time.

Additionally, he did not pay inflated parking ramp fees to attend a metro-area university. And finally, he wasn’t pulling out his wallet on a daily basis for a quick dinner en route to class.

For Kaczrowski, the cons boil down to the challenges of networking in a community emphasizing distance and age. Being significantly younger than the average student – is a middle-aged woman – was also a challenge for him.

It’s the pros that are key, and in Kaczrowski’s case, worth the effort an on-line higher degree demands. Save, save, save. Save on tuition, gas expenses, city parking fees, valuable commuting time and dining out on the fly.

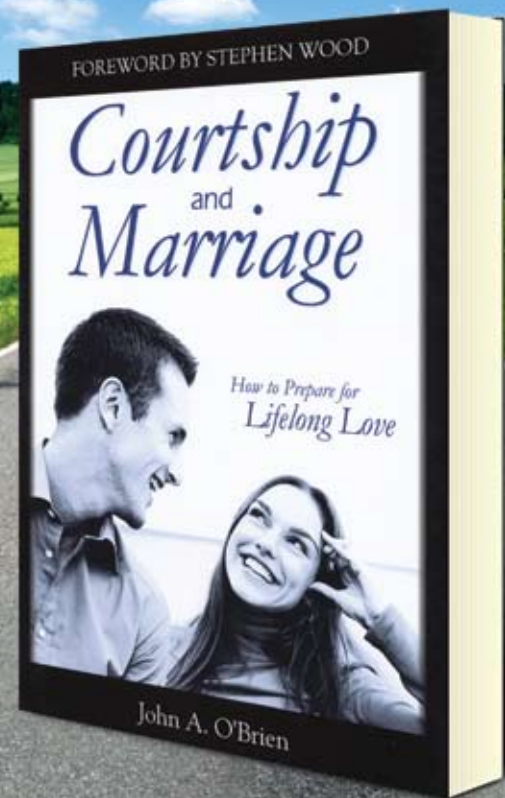
Most important for Kaczrowski and many non-traditional students like him is the flexibility. And that never gets old. ■

20
Something
the column for Catholic
young adults

by Christina
Capecchi

Read Christina's column and listen to her podcast at
www.ReadChristina.com

Courtship & Marriage



by John A O'Brien

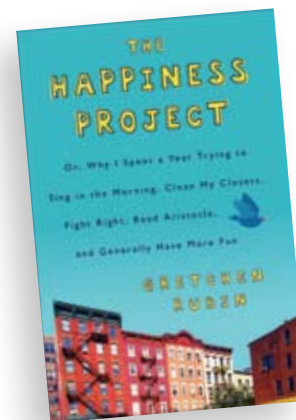
“This small volume is packed with practical, time tested advice on how to choose a suitable spouse, preserve chastity, and cultivate true love. The first step in creating a ‘divorce-proof’ marriage is to read and heed the wisdom in this book.”

– Jim Burnham

**Purchase Courtship & Marriage at
www.familylifecenter.net**

The happiness project

by DAN FLAHERTY



*Bestselling
book,
cultural
phenomenon*

Gretchen Rubin's epiphany came on a rainy April morning: She wasn't happy enough. Not that she didn't have reason to be. She was married to the love of her life and blessed with two daughters. Gretchen loved her work as a writer and lived in her favorite city, New York.

Why wasn't she happy?

Rubin was determined to find out, so she embarked on a year-long "happiness project," resolving to change her life in feasible but transformative ways. The results were so positive that she turned it into a book by the same title, resulting in a mega-bestseller and a cultural phenomenon.

The Happiness Project published by Harper has spawned groups around the country where people come together to support each other in carrying out their resolutions. Rubin is deeply engaged in this movement. She blogs daily, offering insights on how to be happy. Her website, www.happiness-project.com, includes a toolbox to help people develop their own projects.

All of this poses questions for single Catholics. Is this search for happiness another example of a self-centered search for pleasure or can it work in harmony with authentic Catholic spirituality? How can it apply to the single person's state in life? And how does one get started?

Catholics should have no reservations about adopting Rubin's project. Though a Protestant who is married to a Jew, Rubin's self-described spiritual master is St. Thérèse of Lisieux, the "Little Flower." In the course of her extensive reading, Rubin first read Thomas

DESIGNPICS.COM

Merton and through him found the “Little Flower.”

“I was so surprised to see cranky, macho Merton write reverently about the ‘Little Flower,’” Rubin said. “I decided to read about her myself. I was instantly mesmerized. And the more I re-read her memoir, the most I begin to grasp the true enormity of her spiritual mastery. And she’s funny too!”

Rubin’s attachment to St. Therese is no mere sentimental affection, but the natural result of a project that is very similar to the saint’s “little way,” the emphasis on finding contentment in little things amid daily life.

Staying put

Rubin wasn’t in position to pick up and leave everything “Eat, Pray, Love” style – and she didn’t want too. She was seeking ways to be happier in her circumstances as they were. And throughout the year, the resolutions she makes are heavily based on what she can do for others, rather than what she can do for herself. She commits to being more considerate to her husband, even where it’s not reciprocated.

In her breakdown of fun, she considers “challenging fun” (doing things that may be difficult but rewarding) and

“accommodating fun” (doing things primarily for others) to be of greater import than “relaxing fun” (watching TV or surfing Facebook). A reader who takes Rubin’s ideas to heart will end up living a life that benefits those around them.

Single Catholics will not be able to identify completely with Rubin as they search for the happy marriage she shares with her husband. The author often stresses that everyone’s happiness project will look different. Part of a single person’s project might be putting themselves in the right situations to find a spouse. Rubin, as one who “has it all,” admitted concern as to how her project might be perceived – “to someone with huge happiness challenges, would my approach seem...flippant?”

That has not been the case, according to Rubin. “What I’ve found is that my approach really resonates with a person in those circumstances. I’ve heard from people who are really, really suffering and doing a happiness project has helped them.”

Rubin’s website offers tools for helping people craft their own project. The author did extensive preparation for her own project. After her initial inspiration, she spent eight months reading, crafting resolutions and identifying her “12 Personal Commandments,” simple reminders to help keep herself on track.

“Be Gretchen” was at the top of the list, and important items like “Do what ought to be done” and “There is only love” mark her list. Part of the preparation for anyone undertaking a happiness project is identifying their passion. Rubin loves to read, so thorough preparation for her own project enhanced the experience. “Reading is my favorite thing to do, and I’m fascinated with happi-

ness... it became my job to read every book on happiness I could find.”

Starting small

One of the countless Catholics influenced by *The Happiness Project* was Renee Schaefer Horton, 51, a writer from Tucson, Ariz. As a high-school English teacher and volunteer confirmation instructor, Horton has found it eye-opening to realize how much stress her students feel. “A lot of kids have a hard time being happy. They are really stressed out in a way that doesn’t seem normal.” Horton believes young people can benefit from a happiness project, although she shares



Rubin’s emphasis that each person must tailor their own. For Horton, that meant simplifying the process.

“I’m obsessive-compulsive,” she said. “The resolutions got to be a to-do list, so I whittled it down.”

It also meant examining her definition of happiness. “We seek pleasure, but that doesn’t necessarily make us happy. Happy isn’t high. It’s just satisfied.”

Picking something small to start with is imperative, Horton added. The ability to accomplish an objective can bring enormous satisfaction. So if you want to exercise daily, Horton said, don’t start by trying to block off an hour. Start by never taking the elevator.

Horton started small by trying to be kind to one person every day – and then

ST. THÉRÈSE of LISIEUX



The “Little Flower Of Jesus” was a cloistered nun in France in the early part of the 20th century. Stricken with tuberculosis, she died at the age of 24, but her abandonment to God and her ability to find him in the smallest of ways brought her to sainthood. Though she never left the convent, she is co-patroness of the missions (along with St. Francis Xavier), the church’s reminder to us that suffering and prayer bring the grace that spurs missionary activity.

two people every day. “When I went through an entire day behind kind to my husband – offering to get him water, for instance, or feeding the dogs when it was his chore – I felt really happy. It was like ‘Yippee!’”

A recurring theme in Rubin’s book is that you must make yourself happier before you can help others. “A happiness project is really something you have to do yourself,” Rubin said, “because you can’t change anyone but yourself. If your happiness project requires someone else to participate, it probably won’t work! The good news is that if you change, a relationship changes.”

In that regard, undertaking a happiness project can be seen as fulfilling Christ’s teaching to remove the plank from one’s own eye first. Only then can you be fit to remove it from your brother’s eye.

Then everyone’s plank-free and happy. ■

AN ONLINE TOOLBOX

The Happiness Project Toolbox provides material for readers to brainstorm and develop their own projects. From resolutions to one-sentence journals to inspirational thoughts, the seeds for your project can be accessed at www.happinessprojecttoolbox.com.

Happiness 101

by DAN FLAHERTY

An academic approach to an American pursuit

The course title seems vague, but that doesn't deter students.

"The Search For Happiness" is one of the most popular classes offered in the Catholic Studies department at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minn., routinely filling to capacity.

"It's a kind of introduction to the whole of Catholic Studies," said the professor, Father Michael Keating.

The subject is a powerful draw, he said. "We wanted a course that would pose the big important issues as a starting point for the Catholic intellectual tradition. We also wanted to begin with the kind of question that everyone is asking. Who isn't looking for happiness? It's a good place to start."

That's just the beginning, insist Father Keating's former students. Leandra Hubka, a 2010 graduate of the University of St. Thomas, says the course helped her become a self-professed Catholic nerd. "It was one of the first times in my life that someone explained to me why the Catholic Church teaches what it does and not just what it teaches. It increased my desire to delve into the nitty-gritty details of Catholicism."

Father Keating has taught the course for five years now and he's identified three overarching goals. "I hope to be



UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS

Father Michael Keating has taught "The Search For Happiness" at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minn., for five years.

able to sketch out the story of salvation history, the great drama of the human race, in a clear and integrated way. For many Catholics, though we know the basics of the faith, we sometimes lack the overall imaginative vision that makes the Catholic vision so compelling."

After outlining salvation history, Father Keating delves deeper into the faith and a better understanding of human happiness.

"I try to fill in what could be called a Catholic anthropology, which is to say, an understanding of what it means to be a human. When we understand who we

are, we'll have a better idea of what sort of happiness is suited to us and what are the false roads that seem to lead to happiness but in fact don't."

With these goals in mind, Father Keating strives to help the student in other dimensions of their studies. "I hope to help students in clarity of thinking and writing, part of their basic equipment as thinking human beings. In that sense it's also an introduction to the tradition of the liberal arts in education."

Father Keating strives to sharpen these skills by assigning weekly one-page papers covering the course readings (see sidebar).

With the amount of required reading, Hubka said it's difficult to choose a favorite piece. However, she cited articles by Dorothy Sayers and Juli Loesch Wiley among her favorites.

Another one of her favorite readings is C.S. Lewis' *The Great Divorce*, which also stands out to Father Keating.

"I continue to find *The Great Divorce* to be both entertaining and thought-provoking," he said. "It's long been one of my favorite books."

Not only has the course been successful in deepening students' understanding of the Catholic faith, but it has sparked other transformations.

"I know of more than one student who decided to enter seminary after the course," Father Keating said, "a few who weren't Catholic and determined to enter the church, and a fairly large number who decided to major in Catholic Studies as a result of their experience."

Father Keating doesn't take much credit. "I chalk this up not so much to a good course as to the inherent power of the Gospel to change lives. If in taking the course students come face to face with Christ and the claims of his kingdom in a new or deeper way, it's no surprise that they may seriously change their lives. It's an old and ever new story." ■

Happiness homework

Read along with Father Keating and his students.

CORE COURSE MATERIALS



THE GREAT DIVORCE
C.S. LEWIS



MY WAY OF LIFE
WALTER FARRELL, OP



THE FOUR CARDINAL VIRTUES
JOSEF PIEPER



THE HOLY BIBLE

Become your best self

Five dos and five don'ts
in five important areas

BY DUSTIN RIECHMANN

You're single, and you're Catholic. Those two characteristics may say a lot about you to the rest of the world. But you're not defined by the world or our society. The quality of your life and your impact on others starts with you. It's up to you to make the most of the spe-

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cial gifts God has given you.

The power to live your best life begins with you, and that is both an awesome privilege and a sacred responsibility.

The call for self-improvement has become vogue. From Oprah Winfrey to late-night infomercials to hundreds of blogs covering the topic, the idea of living your best life seems ubiquitous.

So how does all of this talk about personal development apply to you?

As a single person, you are uniquely

positioned to learn, reflect and prepare for your best life. Although life can seem chaotic some days, there will likely never be another stage in your life when you have such freedom of time and energy. Seize this opportunity to make positive changes for yourself before the responsibilities of marriage or family life or religious service demand your attention.

Beth Klein, 28, of Omaha, recognizes the opportunity that being single provides to improve her life and the

lives of those around her. Although she works full-time as a research technologist, she says being single “allows me to have free time to get involved in community activities.”

Klein also uses her time to participate in a variety of programs offered in her archdiocese, while keeping her faith a priority. “Being single gives me

Jesus Christ.

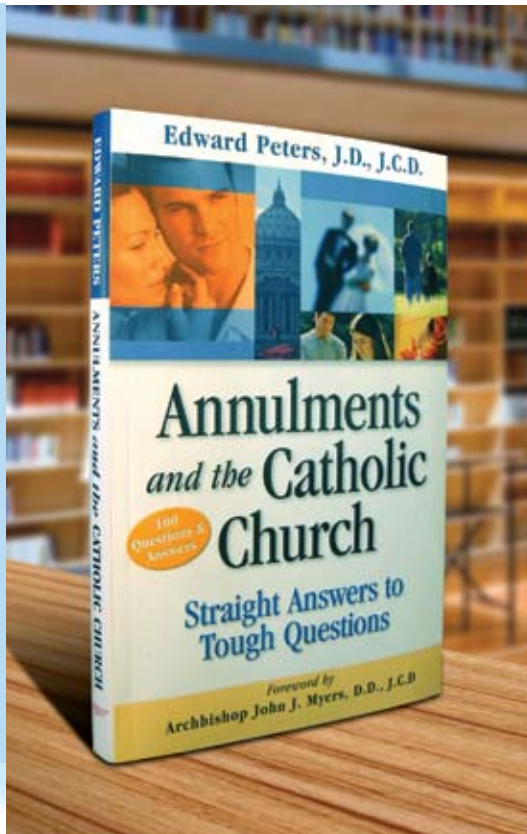
Following his example isn’t easy, but Pope John Paul II once offered this encouragement: “The way Jesus shows you is not easy. Rather, it is like a path winding up a mountain. Do not lose heart! The steeper the road, the faster it rises towards ever wider horizons.”

Our Catholic faith teaches us that

Our Catholic faith teaches us that living life to the fullest is not just a matter of personal satisfaction, but *a way to honor a sacred gift from God.*

Straight Answers to Tough Questions

Written in everyday language, this is an invaluable resource for lay people who want to understand this challenging issue.



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more time for personal prayer. When more people – a husband, kids – depend on you, I think it would be harder to make that one-on-one time with God.”

As a Catholic, you have a clearer and more meaningful framework to guide you in your journey to develop into the uniquely talented person that God designed you to be. The church provides great wisdom through more than 2,000 years of sacred tradition, plus the guidance available to us through the saints and church leaders.

Klein embraces these avenues. “Being Catholic helps to give me direction in life,” she said. “There are so many resources available to me to help me find my way.”

Of course, the ultimate example of living your best life was given to us through the teachings and actions of

living life to the fullest is not just a matter of personal satisfaction, but a way to honor a sacred gift from God. This is the gift of your life’s vocation.

Scott McDermott, 42, a graduate student in St. Louis, has faced challenges in finding his vocation. However, his Catholic faith provides the reassurance and the guidance that he needs to keep moving forward in confidence. “When I am tempted to give up, God always lets me know that in spite of my faults and weaknesses, he has chosen me to be part of his family and to fulfill the vocation he has given me.”

Whether you’re called to marriage, religious life or the consecrated single life, now is the time to take advantage of your status as a single Catholic believer and prepare for your lifelong vocation. Start by taking small steps in important arenas.



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you'll have that much more money to save over the long haul," Sisterhen said. Develop a game plan for paying down your debts starting with any high-interest credit cards you're carrying a balance on.

means you're wasting money. You'll have a much easier time entering into marriage, or whatever your life-long vocation may be, if you are on solid financial footing.

harmless, the monthly payments will remain a drag on your cash flow – and your life – for a very long time if your borrowing gets out of control.

4 Get health insurance The number one cause of bankruptcy in the United States is an inability to pay medical bills. You may feel invincible, but you most certainly are not. At a minimum, enroll in a low-cost plan that covers catastrophic events.

2 Don't go it alone Accountability relationships for singles are great for sharing financial goals and making sure you follow through to reach them. Sisterhen suggests that you agree to share your goals, progress and setbacks with a friend so you have someone to answer to.

5 Don't buy a brand new car Recent statistics cited by financial guru Dave Ramsey show that one third of car buyers sign up for a six-year loan at an average interest rate of 9.6 percent. Among these buyers the average price of the car slightly exceeds \$26,000. This means that one third of the cars you see on the road are dragging a \$475 monthly payment behind them.

5 Have a plan You can't be successful unless you know what success looks like to you. Plan for the lifestyle and financial reality that you have now and where you'd like to go.

3 Don't live without financial boundaries Friends and family are notorious for negatively influencing spending decisions. When you don't have the money, don't be afraid to say no so you can meet your own financial obligations and goals.

The car dealer won't tell you that your awesome new car loses about 25 percent of its value the instant you drive it off the lot. After four years your car has lost about 70 percent of its value. What does that mean? After six years you've paid almost \$33,000 for a \$26,000 car that's now worth maybe \$6,000. Not a good deal.

Don't 1 Don't say you'll worry about your finances once you find the right person and marry Putting off the action of taking control of your financial situation means you're wasting time, which also

4 Don't use student loans to finance your lifestyle You'll end paying off those new shoes and that steak dinner for many years. While relatively low interest rates make student loans seem

Buy a used car with cash instead, and you'll be making huge strides in your path to financial freedom.

Do 1 Develop a monthly spending plan Deciding where your money will go before you spend it gives you control and confidence. Don't fear the word budget. A spending plan is not designed to control you;

it's simply a tool that lets you take control of your financial life.

2 Create an emergency fund for unexpected expenses Life happens. Seventy eight percent of Americans will have a negative financial event in any given

10-year period, according to Derek Sisterhen, a financial coach and the host of the online show Past Due. This is not an "if," it's a "when."

3 Pay off your consumer debts "The financial and emotional freedom that comes from dumping debt is priceless, plus

STRONGER FAITH

Do

1 Pray Use the time and quiet moments available to you as a single person to speak with God. This is a simple act, but it could be the most powerful tool available in living your best life and better understanding God's will. As McDermott puts it, "God's plans for us are much better than our plans for ourselves."



2 Attend Mass As a practicing Catholic, this may be second nature to you, but be careful not to lose it as a priority in your life. Our Mass is the central location where we receive Jesus, experience the other sacraments and assemble as a community of believers. It's vital.

3 Learn about your faith Education is an obvious

component of living a better life, yet many people overlook the opportunities to learn more about their spiritual life. As a Catholic you have an enormous wealth of informative and inspiring resources available to you.

4 Get social Get out there and get involved in a variety of church and community activities. You'll make a difference for others while experiencing new levels of fulfillment.

5 Choose the right university Whether for undergraduate or graduate studies, many singles are working on their formal education. According to Deacon Patrick O'Toole, director of the Office of Marriage & Family Life for the diocese of Springfield in Illinois, "the most important decision a young person will make on his or her road to discernment is what college or university they will attend."

Deacon O'Toole points out that the college experience will most often determine their

future occupation, may introduce them to their marriage partner and will dramatically influence their world view. Choose wisely and for the right reasons.

Don't

1 Don't just attend Mass While Mass is a central gathering place for Catholics, our life at church shouldn't stop there. Get to know your fellow parishioners and get involved in social and service activities. McDermott has made this a priority, as he realizes that "the church is a family too."

2 Don't buy what our culture is selling It can be easy to follow social trends and let your beliefs be unduly influenced by the media and culture that you experience each day. Always use your faith and the knowledge of church teaching as a foundation for your decisions.

3 Don't hide your faith It

can be tempting to simply blend in and not discuss your Catholic beliefs with friends or colleagues, but it's important for you and for them that you share your faith. You have good reason to be proud of your Catholicism.

4 Don't shy away from tough

discussions In a culture where your Catholic beliefs may not always be popular, it can be appealing to simply hide them and roll with the punches when controversial conversations arise. However, the world needs strong defenders of the Christian faith, and these are your opportunities to share your knowledge.

5 Don't limit friendships to Catholics It's great if you develop friendships from your interactions at church and in Catholic service organizations. But if you exclude relationships with those who don't share your faith life, you could miss out on a great diversity of opinions and interests.

SHARPER CAREER

Do

1 Understand your personality As a career coach, Justin Lukasavage understands the importance of matching your career path with your personality. "If you're not a fit for the position, don't pursue it. You won't be happy."

2 Plan your life first and make your career fit around it While many people do it backwards in our culture, it's important that you plan your career around the lifestyle you desire. It can be difficult to change course once you've started down a career path that doesn't match up well with your desires,



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but that may be the best move in helping you achieve your best life.

3 Realize that self-employment could be a great option “In the next few years it’s estimated that only 50 percent of workers will be traditional employees,” Lukasavage said. The rest will be contractors, temps, and electronic immigrants.” It could be a great time for you to build a business.

4 Get guidance from others It can be very helpful to get input from others when evaluating your career goals. Professional coaches, pastors, family and friends are great places to get feedback.

5 Be intentional about what you do Rather than

waiting for something to fall in your lap, go out and make it happen.

Don't

1 Don't pay much attention to qualifications It's much more important that you're aware of the job description and that it matches your qualifications. “Employers receive truckloads of resumes and they often list required qualifications that they don't pay attention to, in order to limit the number of applications,” Lukasavage said.

2 Don't send blind resumes to companies Build a relationship first and start with a simple letter addressed to a real person. Lukasavage advises, “If you don't know the person's name, don't bother.”

3 Don't stop learning It's vital that you be a lifelong learner. By continuing to learn new things every day, you will not only improve your career success, you'll be improving yourself.

4 Don't depend on prayer Prayer is helpful, but there comes a time when you need to start doing. Moses was in a tough spot as he led people out of Egypt and asked God for help. His answer was to get the people moving.

5 Don't settle Don't just take a job and resign yourself to working there for the rest of your life. That doesn't provide security, and you won't be happy if you settle for less than the best fit.



hold more wisdom than you likely realize. While you shouldn't be overly dependent on them, you'll be well-served to accept their counsel.

3 Help your family by using your talents Everyone holds some unique skills and abilities, and sharing those talents with your family can be a wonderful gift. Whether you know

how to weld, do taxes or take great pictures, offer your help to your loved ones.

4 Honor thy mother and father They may be technologically delayed and unable to properly pronounce Chipotle, but you still have to heed this commandment. Maintain respect for Mom and Dad – and show it to them.

5 Hold holiday traditions sacred...for now If you get married, this will likely change as you blend the traditions of two families. But while you can, take advantage of your flexibility by coming home for Christmas, attending Easter Mass with your siblings or whatever activities have been part of your family's holiday rituals.

Don't

1 Don't take your family for granted When we get busy and focused on our own life, it's easy to start taking our family for granted as if they'll always be there. The truth is that your grandparents and maybe even your parents won't be around for much longer. Gain their wisdom and spend quality time with them while you can.

2 Don't simply be the person your parents raised you to be Some parents can be overbearing and they live their lives through their children or want them to follow in their footsteps. They may have

HAPPIER FAMILY

Do
1 Spend quality time with your family After you move away from your parents (assuming you don't move back), it's

easy to forget how much they value spending time with you. Visit as much as you reasonably can and make sure your time there is about

them and not full of other distractions.
2 Accept advice from your parents Your parents do

good intentions, but it's important that we be the person God wants us to be rather than fulfill the vision of our parents.

3 Don't allow envy to enter into your relationships with siblings

Remember the parable of the prodigal son? Don't be that person. Nothing good will come of envy or anger. Do not let it lodge in your heart.

4 Don't loan or borrow money from family

There is no easier way to taint a relationship than to introduce the roles of lender (master) and borrower (slave). God tells us this in plain terms in Proverbs 22:7. Although it can seem like a good idea at the time, going into debt with your parents or siblings – or lending to them – rarely ends in a positive way.

5 Don't hold deep grudges

We all say or do things that we regret later, and our family certainly is not perfect. At a time when you are independent and seeing the world through an idealistic lens, it can be easy to be judgmental and let chasms develop in our relationships. This is especially true with close family. Guard against it and treat your family... like family.

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birth control being condemned as an immoral practice.

Instead of discounting these teachings because of what our popular culture has taught us, spend the time to understand why the church instructs us so firmly in these all-important topics. Don't be afraid to have your mind changed.

Don't

1 Don't seek to meet people in places you don't actually enjoy If you hang out in a bar, you'll meet drinkers. In a library, you'll meet students. While you never know where you'll find that great mate, chances are you won't catch marlin fishing in a farm pond.

2 Don't exclude those of another faith Although it

presents special challenges if marriage enters the picture, you may miss some great experiences if you choose to only date those who share your Catholic faith.

3 Don't maintain a long-term relationship with someone you'd never marry

While it's fun to meet new people and experience the casual dating scene, you must reach a point in a relationship where you decide if it has a chance of going to the next level. If your partner is not marriage material, then it may be time to move on.

4 Don't avoid serious discussions

When you decide a relationship is worth hanging onto for the long term, make sure the big issues get discussed. It's important

to understand each other's plans for marriage, children, religious practice, money management, etc. so you can ensure your compatibility or work on problem areas.

5 Don't assume that dating is for everyone

Finally, don't feel pressured to hit the dating scene if you feel called in another direction. There are incredible vocations presented outside of marriage, and you should seriously discern whether God may be calling you to religious life or consecrated singlehood. ☐

Dustin Riechmann writes at EngagedMarriage.com and FitMarriage.com, where he encourages married, engaged and, yes, even single folks to live their best lives.

HEALTHIER DATING

Do

1 Be yourself It can be tempting to put on a bit of a show when you're part of the dating scene. But you don't want someone falling in love with you if it's not really you that they know.

2 Be upfront with your beliefs

If your faith in God and your belief in Catholicism are important to you, then you should certainly let these positive attributes be known early on in a relationship. If your partner sees these as a negative, then it's important to know that before investing too

much time together.

3 Be open to new friendships

When you are single, be willing to meet new people and explore new relationships. If you only agree to speak to someone you're sure is marriage material, there's a great chance you'll miss some great marriage material.

4 Set standards for your relationships

When you are pursuing your best life, your love life is going to be an important component. Make sure you set your standards

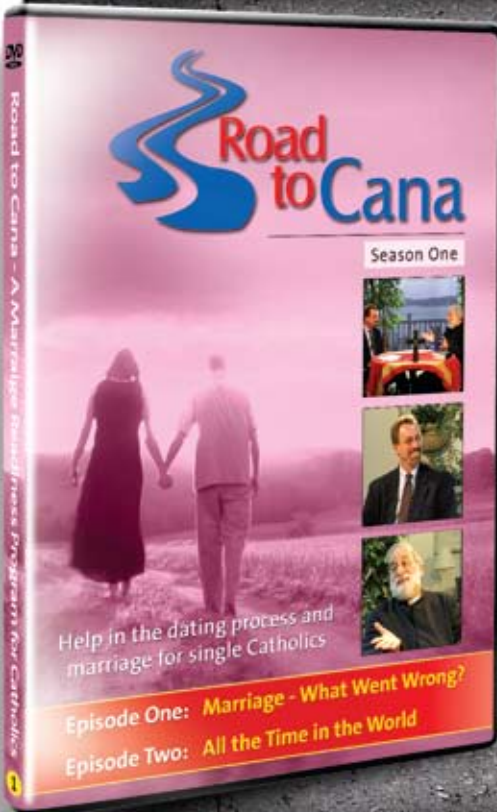
accordingly.

Beth Klein took this approach with her current boyfriend. "Before I began dating him, I made a list of my 10 must-haves and 10 can't-stands," she said. "You really have to stick to such a list, I believe, in order to end up with a good partner in life."

5 Understand the church's teachings on sexuality

Sex outside of marriage and cohabitation are two areas where our culture clashes with the teachings of our church. And then there's the issue of artificial

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Bold bucket lists

THESE CATHOLIC SINGLES HAVE LOTS TO SEE AND DO BEFORE THEY LEAVE THIS EARTH.

KATE-MADONNA HINDES, 29
Chaska, Minn.

- I'm not going to discount my life, my wants and my needs for a man's attention. That's so 2005.
- I want to go to Auschwitz and see Anne Frank's Holland home.
- I'm going to find my birth mother. There's an envelope that's been sitting in my drawer for almost a year now requesting a \$25 check and a simple form. It even has a stamp on it.

I want to go to the moon.



- I want Anthony Hopkins to read any outrageous bill that comes in the mail. Sad news sounds better with a British accent.

- I want to die without severe debt.
- When I'm 98 I want to look at myself in the mirror and see my sagging skin and think: "It all had a great run."
- Someday I'm going to recreate Jack Vettriano's "The Singing Butler" painting – except with real people. (Same swanky red dress.)
- I'm going to keep up my Flickr feed.
- I'm going to go to Big Sur, Calif. It's been an obsession since the Death Cab For Cutie song "Bixby Canyon Bridge."

CARLITO ARPON, 49
Ewa Beach, Hawaii

- I'd meet all of my sister-in-law's medical needs and buy her that Hawaiian beach-front property she's been dreaming of.
- I'd make sure my kids, nieces, and nephews go to great Catholic colleges faithful to the magisterium.
- I would love to visit Jerusalem, Lourdes and Fatima.
- I want to visit the friends I've met online – and go on a few face-to-face dates!

- I dream of going to the Vatican and saying aloha to the pope. Does he play chess, I wonder?

I want to see Glacier Bay in Alaska and watch the whales breach or splash me with a tail flap!



- I would help improve the CCD program for Catholic youth across the globe to instill the fire of our faith.
- I'll climb the Stairway To Heaven hiking trail on Oahu.
- I want to visit Kalaupapa, where St. Damien of Molokai lived and worked.
- I'd pay off the house.
- I would visit the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico.

PEN AND WHALE: ©2010 JUPITERIMAGES CORPORATION

COURAGEOUS CATHOLICS



A builder ▶ Meet **Ansel Augustine**, 33, an archdiocesan coordinator of black youth and young adult ministry from New Orleans

You lost 17 loved ones in Hurricane Katrina, including the woman you were planning to propose to. How did you cope?

I won't lie: I'm still coping. I felt like Job from the Bible. I "let go and let God," as we say here, because I didn't even know where to begin to deal with this.

How did their deaths motivate you to help rebuild the city?

It is my main motivation. Growing up the way I did, you never quit. If someone or something knocks you down, you get up and keep moving.

Was there a turning point in your healing?

I hit rock bottom when

I first came back home and saw the destruction. I was homeless, living in the street because there was nowhere to live. During the day I'd go to my home church, St. Peter Claver Catholic Church, to rebuild it. It was then, as I cleaned and gutted it, that I realized God could turn my test into a testimony.

What has it been like to date after losing your fiancée-to-be?

It took me three years to start dating again. And in those new relationships, I felt uneasy. I still wasn't ready to be completely open.

How did Katrina change you?

I keep to myself more. I busy myself with work to keep my mind off the people and places I miss. Holidays are hard. But Katrina did

make me stronger. I know what God is able to do in my life if I give my issues over to him. I don't stress about little things.

WILDEST DREAM
I'd love to open a 24-hour community center in New Orleans with all kinds of social services and recreational facilities.

FAVORITE BIBLE VERSE
All of Romans 8, especially 8:31.

FAVORITE SAINT
St. Augustine.

SOURCE OF COURAGE
My ancestors in faith. The same God who helped them helps me.

A leader ▶ Meet **Esther Gomez**, 25, a Marine Corps Officer from Jacksonville, N.C.

What compelled you to become a Marine?

I wanted to be a police officer, and I knew the best way to get prepared was to join the military. The Marine Corps was the best organization.

Tell me what your job?

I'm a ground supply officer, and I'm three years into a four-year term. I deployed to Afghanistan from May 2009 to October 2009. I was in

Helmand Province, a combat zone.

That sounds scary!

My work isn't too scary compared with most of my peers, but we all have to deal with the unknown. The hardest part is when you're getting overwhelmed but you have to keep it together for your guys.

Did you bring any holy cards with you?

I brought a field rosary, a St. Michael medal, a Mother of Guadalupe medal and a card from my grandmother's funeral. I wore the rosary and medals with my dog tags.

Because we didn't have access to sacraments for weeks, those items reminded me God was with me everywhere. It solidified my relationship with God in the most



WILDEST DREAM
Finding someone who I can trust so I can step back and share my life with him.

FAVORITE BIBLE VERSE
Esther 4:16.

FAVORITE SAINT
St. Michael.

SOURCE OF COURAGE
Holy Spirit drives me. I think of my role models - my grandmother, coaches and mentors. Most of all, the Marines who look to me to be strong - if I can't be courageous for them, then I don't deserve to lead them.

difficult of circumstances. For years I hadn't practiced my Catholic faith. When I returned, I got confirmed. I have attended Mass every week since I got back from Afghanistan.

COURAGEOUS CATHOLICS

(CONTINUED)



A seeker ▶ Meet **Julie Olson**, 36, a faith formation coordinator from Minneapolis

Tell me about the discernment process.

God led me to the congregations he wanted me to visit. The key is to allow God to be in charge. Discernment isn't like looking for a college or a job. It's learning to listen to the One whom my soul loves. The call is his.

How did the call to religious life begin?

I think it began in high school when my confirmation sponsor said, "Every good Catholic woman should consider becoming a nun." From that day on I ran from the idea. Years later, while praying in adoration, Jesus got my attention again.

Did you also feel a pull towards marriage?

That's all I had ever considered and when my initial discernment efforts didn't work out, I decided to go back to that seeming default. But one day at a friend's wedding, I realized I didn't want another person to enter my relationship with God. I wanted him alone.

WILDEST DREAM

To sit down and have a scholarly discussion with the Holy Father.

FAVORITE BIBLE VERSE Psalm 57:1.

FAVORITE SAINT St. Joseph.

SOURCE OF COURAGE From Jesus Christ alone - his passion, suffering and resurrection.

What was the hardest part?

Last fall I hit bottom. I was depressed, certain I was called to religious life but, well...I didn't want it! I was held back by my own vain will to do what I wanted. I wasn't ready to make a sacrifice of love for God.

I've only recently surrendered to God's will. Now I'm planning to enter religious life, God willing. I've finally realized that sense of peace.

You've lived a full life - traveling, athletic training, night life. Do you expect it to narrow with religious life?

Instead of narrowing, life becomes more real, more intense, expanded to its fullest. A vocation is life-giving. I never felt so alive as when I had the freedom to spend my days in prayer, living not for myself but for God.

A servant ▶ Meet **Dave Sloan**, 48, a marketer from Atlanta

When did you found Singles Serving Orphans?

Singles Serving Orphans [SSO] started in February 2008 as a collaboration with Ellen Speltz, a chastity speaker who read an article I wrote on the desperate need for singles ministry and invited me to help her start a mission trip for singles. I insisted it be with orphans: Orphans need grown-ups to love them, and singles need to love kids. We've done about 15 trips now with an average of 12-15 people per trip.

Tell me about the missionaries.

People come again and again. We've had all sorts of conversions. People begin to be healed at the very deepest level.

Promoting chastity isn't easy.

Teaching chastity is darn near impossible.



But teaching chastity to a group of people who are committed to loving orphans brings supernatural grace with it. No one wants to jeopardize our good work. They all want to become what my boss Matthew Kelly calls "the best version of themselves."

How has the experience opened your heart?

I have become optimistic about how effective the Gospel is at changing people's lives when it's presented in the context of direct service to orphans. People become almost miraculously open to learning about chastity and the deepest meaning of charity, prayer and the Eucharist.

I meet people all the time, people I might have dismissed before as not

being ready or willing to accept Christ. But now I think that if only I can love this person enough to get him to come with me to the orphanage, then the missionaries and the orphans and the beauty of what we share together will change him.

WILDEST DREAM
To see the Catholic Church bring American singles from isolated modern life and into the family life of the church.

FAVORITE BIBLE VERSE John 1:12.

FAVORITE SAINT
John Paul the Great.

SOURCE OF COURAGE
Source of courage I am the weakest and most powerless person I know. This is where I meet God, in my powerlessness and my weakness.



Keeping *the* light

BY MEG MCDONNELL

“WHAT WOULD YOU PAY TO HAVE AN ISLAND TO YOURSELF FOR TWO WEEKS?” asked Mike Storms, of West Saint Paul, Minn.

Probably quite a bit if expenses weren't a concern. Many would jump at the opportunity to break away from the daily grind, relax and refresh themselves, absorbing the beauty of God in nature. We're a fast-paced, multi-tasked society, and a hushed island is often considered paradise.

But did you know a tranquil island experience is available for free? In fact, it's in the form of a volunteer program, a unique opportunity to serve as a keeper of a lighthouse.

Storms, 50, participated in this volunteer program for the first time late last

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summer and returned again this summer to an experience that he describes as “a wonderful challenge.”

Located on Michigan Island in Bayfield, Wis., this historic lighthouse is only accessible by boat on Lake Superior. And for Storms, who is single, its remote location was what attracted him to a three-and-half-week-long stay as

It's a calling we can identify with. **We too are called to be keepers of the light** – the light of Christ – and this mission requires some time away from the hustle and bustle to reflect and connect with Christ.

lighthouse was beautifully refinished on the main floor but not on the upper levels. Its set-up is simple and rustic. Water is pumped from the ground, stored in a tank, and pumped in through gravity. To get hot water to bathe, Storms took a solar shower – five-gallon bags of water that warmed in the sun and then pump through a shower head.

For food, Storms simplified his diet, recognizing that everyday life offers the convenience of 24-hour grocery shopping that this experience did not afford. He brought canned foods and dry foods, as opposed to fresh fruit and

vegetables, which would have gone bad during his stay.

There was minimal electricity on the island, just a six-panel solar electricity system used mostly for communication devices, so Storms used a battery-powered headlamp for light as needed.

And speaking of communication, aside from check-ins on the radio network and interactions with visitors to the island, Storms had no communication with those outside the island. No Internet. No cell phone.

“It was a stretch,” Storms said of his conditions, “but a welcome change.”

Such a change may be difficult for some, but Storms said he relished the time away from daily life. While Storms doesn't use much Internet or cell phone as is, the time apart from the hustle and bustle and material distractions offered a special opportunity to grow and reflect. He cherished the tranquility.

A SPECIAL MISSION

As keeper of the lighthouse, Storms' responsibility was to maintain the grounds of the lighthouse and the house itself and to provide lighthouse tours to visitors of the island.

The length of tours varied, depending on how much history the visitors wanted. Some tourists were particularly interested in the families and individuals who had lived in the lighthouse.

“I was inspired by the calling of the light-keepers,” Storms said, “to live in such isolation and to keep the boaters safe.”

Sacrifice and dedication were involved in this calling. For the Christians, it's a calling we can identify with. We too are called to be keepers of the

light – the light of Christ – and this mission requires some time away from the hustle and bustle to reflect and connect with Christ. It also requires sacrificing things we'd rather hold on to.

For Storms, reflection was the signature of his island stay. Some came through a social dimension: While giving tours during the day, Storms was able to easily develop relationships with others. Highlighting the beauty and history of the lighthouse made for many meaningful relationships. And with his nights mostly free, Storms had ample time to reminisce, think, and journal.

The trumpet instructor spent many nights by the water playing his trumpet into the stillness of the night in what he called audio journaling.

“I played my horn for hours on the dock,” Storms said, reliving childhood memories through music and reflecting

on life's joys and challenges.

“Most of life's problems stem from the fact that most people can't spend five minutes alone,” Storms said, recalling a quote that resonates with him.

“Wisdom grows in quiet,” he continued. “Whenever we challenge ourselves to go beyond the edges of our experiences, out of our comfort zone, we better ourselves. We become better equipped for future challenges and unknowns in life.”

Singles like Storms are uniquely equipped to make time for remote quietness and growth, as their decision to escape the throes of life for a period usually does not affect others as much.

And so, time away from the busyness of life might be just the prescription needed to strengthen our relationships with Christ, so we can be protectors of the Light and vessels of the Light to all we encounter. ■

Interested in being a keeper of the lighthouse?

Contact the National Parks of America www.nps.gov/getinvolved/volunteer.htm and ask specifically to volunteer for the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore, located at <http://www.nps.gov/apis/index.htm>.



WHAT YOU'LL NEED FOR THE TRIP:

- Camping supplies** – headlamp, solar shower, hand laundry supplies
- Non-perishable foods**
- Bible**, saint biographies, journals
- A positive attitude** and a willingness to be challenged

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The special call of
consecrated virginity

BRIDE OF CHRIST

BY DIANE KULSETH



“I TO MY BELOVED AND MY BELOVED TO ME.”

Those words are engraved on the ring of a bride. In the presence of her mother, friends, and the bishop, she promised to love and cherish her Beloved all the days of her life.

While she looks like an ordinary bride, Therese Ivers' calling is different.

Ivers, 29, grew up in Southern California, the oldest of four children. Early on she felt a desire to live for God in some form. “I read about the saints and I was inspired by them,” Ivers said. “I knew since I was young that I felt called to give.” At the age of 18, Ivers joined the Carmelites. There she realized her vocation was not to religious life. She left the convent, unsure of her future.

Meanwhile, Ivers enrolled in college and began dating. She entered into a promising relationship, one that appeared altar-bound. But something didn't feel quite right.

“I didn't feel called to marriage, but I really wanted to get married,” Ivers said. She finally ended the relationship – out of respect

PHOTO CREDIT: DIOCESE OF SIOUX FALLS VOCATIONS OFFICE



for the self-gift of marriage.

Single life raised new questions for the spiritual seeker. “I knew I was not meant to be a religious, but I was meant to have a close relationship with God,” she thought.

A flash of recognition

Soon after Ivers learned about the vocation of a consecrated virgin. “I heard that she was a bride of Christ, living in the world but dedicated to a life of service to the church. I thought, ‘That’s me.’”

With thorough discernment and prayer and the approval of her bishop, Bishop Paul Swain of Sioux Falls, S.D., Ivers set a date for her consecration. She was consecrated as a virgin living in the world on Aug. 15, 2009, the Feast of the Assumption.

Apostolic exhortation

TITLE: **Vita Consecrata
(Consecrated Life)**

AUTHOR: **Pope John Paul II**

ISSUE DATE: **March 25, 1996**

It is a source of joy and hope to witness in our time a new flowering of the ancient Order of Virgins, known in Christian communities ever since apostolic times. Consecrated by the diocesan bishop, these women acquire a particular link with the church, which they are committed to serve while remaining in the world. Either alone or in association with others, they constitute a special eschatological image of the heavenly bride and of the life to come, when the church will at last fully live her love for Christ the Bridegroom.



In doing so, Ivers became part of a small group. She is one of approximately 150 consecrated virgins in the United States.

Her consecration Mass was marked by many special touches.

“I dressed in a white dress and I had bridesmaids, much like a wedding ceremony,” she said. “I was given a ring, a bridal veil, and a Liturgy of the Hours.” These gifts represent espousal to Christ, according to the United States Association of Consecrated Virgins.

While much of the consecration reflects that of a wedding ceremony, Ivers notes that many aspects also parallel an ordination. “The bishop extends his hands over a man who presents himself for ordination to the priesthood. It is the same for a consecrated virgin. The bishop also extends his hands over her.”

Ivers’ principal duty as a consecrated virgin is to hold her diocese in prayer. “I have a bond with them, and my life is to be a spiritual mother for the diocese. Otherwise, I have freedom under the bishop.”

This freedom includes the opportunity for Ivers to choose any career path to follow. She has chosen to work as a canon lawyer and judges annulment trials.

“Consecrated virgins can be firefighters, CPAs, any different position,” she said. “She is similar to a married woman in that way.”



ABOVE: Therese Ivers, 29, processes down the aisle of St. Joseph Cathedral’s Sacred Heart Chapel in Sioux Falls, S.D., to begin her consecration Mass.

LEFT: The congregation invokes heavenly intercession through the Litany of the Saints, which is recited at ordinations and religious professions.

‘For the lasting good’

Though the number of consecrated virgins in the U.S. is relatively small, Archbishop Raymond Burke of St. Louis maintains that the number does not matter.

“The consecrated virgins give a strong witness to the purity and selflessness with which we all should love one another,” Burke said in an interview with National Review Online.

“A society which is growing increasingly secularized needs desperately the life and witness of consecrated virgins who call all their brothers and sisters to love as Christ loves – that is, for the lasting good of all.”

In addition to consecrated virginity, another special calling available to male and female Catholic singles is to diocesan hermits. The process to become one takes many years, as the hermit lives a life of solitude and discernment. Like

a consecrated virgin, a hermit must receive the approval of his or her bishop and can make a temporary profession that carries for at least three years.

After the temporary profession, if it is clear that the candidate has the vocation to the eremitic life and has stated how he will live the vows of poverty, chastity, obedience within a life of solitude, then he may be admitted to a final profession.

One note of importance for these two vocations is that most dioceses will require the hermit or consecrated virgin to be financially independent from the diocese. Most find fulfilling careers to cover their costs of living.

It is a quiet, holy path for a small group of Catholic singles.

Ivers hasn’t look back from her consecration day. “Truly, it was a day of great joy and I am humbled to have been called to be the bride of Jesus Christ.” ■

PILGRIM IMAGE

A man wearing a light green long-sleeved shirt, light blue jeans, and a blue cap is riding a brown camel. The camel is sitting on the ground in a desert landscape with rolling hills in the background. The man is looking to the right. The camel has a colorful patterned saddle and a chain around its neck.

From Chicago
to Jerusalem,
a faith-filled single
sees the Holy Land –
and returns with
9 hours of video
footage.

BY **TED RIES**
PHOTOS BY TED RIES



Nathan Mihelich, 32, a Catholic single from Chicago, was one of 15 journalists who participated in a Holy Land familiarization tour in June. The trip was sponsored by Palestine's Ministry of Tourism & Antiquities, the Holy Land Incoming Tour Operators Association, the Arab Hotel Association and the Arab Tourist Guides Union. It was the first press trip Palestine's tourism officials have hosted.

Nathan took some time to share his experience with *Tobias*.

Packing for a trip to the Holy Land isn't easy, especially for a videographer. What all did you bring?

A broadcast news reporter without a camera is like a writer without a pen so that's why I had to double pack on just about everything I needed: two HD Canon video cameras, tripods, microphones, lights, audio cables, extra batteries, two dozen tapes, power converters. The list goes on. I planned to have a live-streaming broadcast on the Internet from Jerusalem so I had additional computer equipment as well. I jammed it all into four suitcases!

How much did it end up weighing?

It averaged about 50 pounds a suitcase. That's some heavy stuff to carry around, so during the trip I made the back of the bus kind of like a makeshift

studio. All my gear was organized in the back row of seats.

Which religious site had the greatest impact on you?

I have to say it was Jacob's well in the Palestinian city of Nablus in the West Bank. That is the place where Jesus encountered a Samaritan woman and discussed the living water that gives all of us eternal life (John 4:1-42). It was quite an experience to touch the limestone well, to watch the bucket as it was lowered into the well and cranked back up, full to the brim with water. I drank the water from a tin cup. It was cool and pure. It made me think about what that experience must have felt like in time of Jesus. I pictured myself watching as Jesus discussed with the woman her infidelity and the path to salvation. It was this physical experience, and many other-

ers like it, that allowed me to live and feel my faith with all my senses.

What was it like to celebrate Mass in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre?

I felt the presence of God throughout Mass as the smell of incense filled my lungs. We say the Nicene Creed at Mass every Sunday but routine prayers like the creed have more impact and are recited with greater meaning when standing on the site where Jesus was crucified, buried and resurrected. Father Rick Potts, C.Ss.R., a fellow journalist on the trip, was the ideal celebrant for Mass.

What was the highlight of the trip?

I've read and heard stories about places in the Bible since I was a little boy. The highlight was to see and visit those places and experience them physically and spiritually.

Do you consider this a vital trip for Catholics?

Yes, I believe all Catholics should make the trip to reaffirm their faith. It strengthened me and reminded me of all the reasons why I am Catholic. Instead of turning away from the church, I urge Catholics to turn toward it by making a

pilgrimage like this.

What surprised you most about the Holy Land?

The public display of how people feel about God. I don't know if there's any other place in the world where their people so openly express their faith.

What were your impressions of Jerusalem?



LEFT: A statue of Mary at the Basilica of the Annunciation in Nazareth, where Roman Catholic tradition maintains the angel Gabriel told Mary she would carry the son of God.



BELOW: This mosaic greets visitors when they step inside Jerusalem's Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which marks the sites Jesus was crucified, buried and rose from the tomb.

I didn't think it looked as old as it is. For a city that's been destroyed and rebuilt so many times it has held on to its charm and character.

What is your favorite souvenir?

My parents have a glass grandfather clock in their living room that contains items the family has collected on international travel throughout the years. After this trip I placed inside that clock a miniature treasure chest with the inscription "Jerusalem" on the lid. The chest is made of a camel bone.

How much was it? Did you barter with the merchant?

Bartering is the fun part. I think I got it for \$10 after negotiating down from \$20.

How critical was it to travel as a group and with a guide?

Guides are a must, and what's the point of traveling if you can't experience it with someone? I'd recommend to anyone making this trip to travel with a group and with experienced guides from different faith backgrounds to get a different perspective on Jerusalem and the situation in the Holy Land.

What does the Middle East offer a tourist that other regions do not?

It offers understanding. Too many American views of the Middle East are skewed from the media and radical extremists intent on biasing our opinion of a land filled of honor, history and



LEFT: Sisters share a seat on a bustling street in the Palestinian city of Nablus in the West Bank.

RIGHT: The hot Jerusalem sun illuminates the site marking Jesus' tomb in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.



peace. By traveling to this part of the world and by having direct interaction with its people and places can we begin to form independent viewpoints. We learn about the people and they in turn can learn about us. This is the best way to deconstruct cultural stereotypes.

Did you feel safe?

I felt safe most of the time, however there was one occasion when I felt very nervous. It was the only time when I was out by myself. I wasn't feeling well so I left the group at the restaurant to go return to our hotel. My driver did not speak English and I did not know



Perched atop the Riwaq Centre in the old city of Ramallah, Palestine, Mihelich learns about architectural conservation underway.

You got an up-close view of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. What did you make of it?

I saw the barrier walls and went through the checkpoints and was submitted to searches and I witnessed some of the ways Israelis protect themselves from terrorism. But what I saw and experienced was not an intimate view of the conflict. The situation is so complex and troublesome that it's hard for an outsider to grasp.

where we were. I was so relieved once we made it to the hotel that I got out of the car quickly, leaving a microphone behind in the vehicle.

What do you think is the most important thing for Americans to know about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?

Both sides are suffering and the U.S. can play a role in bringing about peace, especially when these nations are asking

America and its citizens for assistance.

How much video footage did you take, total, during your trip?

I shot nine tapes. That's about 9 hours and 18 minutes of video. Most of the footage will end up on the cutting room floor! I've put together a short 30 minute video documentary of my experience and a short series of news stories for the Catholic TV network.

Tell me about your video business

In 2010 I began my own company, Savant Multimedia, LLC. I am available on a contract basis to deliver communication, marketing, journalism and video services for religious and non-profit organizations who can't afford to hire full-time communication staff. It is expensive for organizations to staff communication experts

because the job requires various technical skills. I provide those services via small contracts at an affordable rate. I have more information on my website, www.savantmultimedia.org.

Do you see any parallels between Catholicism and entrepreneurship?

My faith compels me to make a real difference in this world, and if I really ever want to accomplish that dream, entrepreneurship is what will allow me to do it.



A pensive Bedouin in Palestine.

How many stamps are in your passport?

My passport is almost full. Coming home from this trip the customs officer asked, "What do you do for a living?" I replied that I am a Catholic journalist and he proceeded to move me along without further investigation. I've enjoyed a lot of personal trips too. I'm blessed to have the means to travel.

What kindled your love of travel?

My great uncle was a Catholic missionary who spent years overseas with Catholic Relief Services. I became interested in his experiences with other people and lands.

How important is it to you that your future wife shares your love of travel?

I think partners need to share at least one or two of their major passions, and travel is definitely my passion. ☑

God speaks in rush hour

by **TERESA CROWE**

It may seem foolish to keep a terrible job, but there are many reasons to do so. I know them well.

There's the power of a paycheck. The dictates of a framed diploma. The weight of others' expectations. And the command of the status quo.

These things kept me going for many months. My expensive engineering degree from Duke had landed me on a prescribed career path in an in-demand industry, a position many of my peers envied.

But I was miserable. I spent eight or nine hours a day on the computer, largely removed from human contact. Sure, I was good at engineering, but I had always viewed it as one part of my life; it was beginning to take up all my time and zap all my energy.

Deep down, I knew what I wanted to do. I wanted to teach. But the prospect of leaving my job and starting over freaked me out.

I brought all that anxiety to a Duke weekend retreat I had volunteered to staff. I had benefited from the retreat as a student and welcomed the chance to remain involved. The weekend was wonderful, and on Sunday morning I awoke with a sense of confidence and peace. *I'm just going to do it*, I thought.


I'll send out resumes to all the Catholic schools in the area. I have nothing to lose!

Funny how quickly that kind of serenity can be dashed. As I made my commute to work the next morning, all the worries and what-ifs flooded my head. It was a familiar but powerful chorus. Sunday felt like a distant memory, a silly fantasy. This was Monday, this was the real world. What the heck was I thinking?

Then a commercial came on the radio for the Catholic schools job fair of Washington, D.C. I was blown away. *OK, OK – I hear you, God! I'll do it.*

Two weeks later I was at the fair, and less than a week after that I had a job offer. I have never felt so guided by God as I did during that transition. When I was about to back down, he spoke clearly.

I am now in my sixth year as a teacher and there is no doubt in my mind that I am living my vocation and doing what I am meant to be doing.

Teaching is exhausting, but when I crawl into bed each night, I feel truly fulfilled. What more could you ask for? 

Crowe lives in Alexandria, Va.